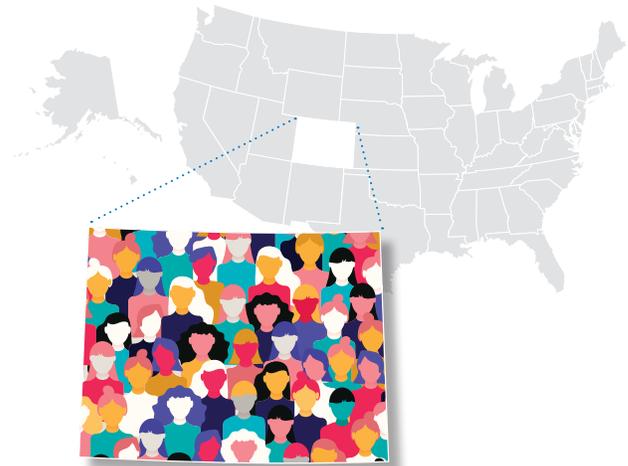


Immigration is a top issue, but the national conversation often misses what is really happening on the ground in Colorado. It has become imperative that policy makers and the general public better understand the economic impacts of immigration in our communities and how smarter immigration policies will benefit our state.

To maintain Colorado's place as the global hub of innovation, our immigration system must be modernized to recruit and retain top talent.¹

This guide highlights the most pressing immigration issues for Colorado business, utilizing data and talking points to help you navigate conversations with your networks.



About Partners



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#1 ■ Transparent, consistent, and predictable administration of immigration laws helps businesses invest and grow in Colorado

Inconsistent application of immigration laws in the U.S. deters investment in Colorado and makes it more difficult for companies to plan their workforce needs.ⁱⁱ Shifting government standards is particularly difficult for foreign workers going through the immigration process, and Colorado will lose talent to other countries that offer a more predictable, transparent process.ⁱⁱⁱ

Businesses are more likely to invest and grow in Colorado if they know the federal government will administer immigration rules in a consistent and predictable manner and without unnecessary delay. Talented foreign workers are more likely to pursue opportunities in Colorado if they know the rules are stable and will not change while they go through the immigration process.^{iv}

#2: Attracting and retaining foreign-born students at Colorado universities, especially those pursuing advanced STEM degrees



International students support Colorado's higher education institutions, local communities, and contribute millions of dollars to the Colorado economy. In 2020, the 11,631 international students at Colorado colleges and universities contributed an estimated \$428.8 million to the Colorado economy through their tuition payments and day-to-day spending.^v

A high percentage of STEM graduate students at U.S. universities are foreign born, and it is important for continued U.S. economic and innovation leadership to be able to retain this talent.^{vi} Other international students are also graduating into economically critical fields like healthcare, where they are assisting in meeting the healthcare needs in our rural and lower-income communities.^{vii}

High-skilled immigrants also create American jobs: past research shows that for each international student who graduates from an American university and remains in the country to work in a STEM-related field, an additional 2.62 American jobs are created.^{viii}

Our universities attract the best and brightest from around the world, but our immigration system forces many of them to go home after graduation, only to compete with us from abroad.^{ix}

Removing barriers to attracting and retaining foreign-born students at Colorado universities and ensuring stable student visa program policies will benefit our higher institutions, the Colorado workforce, and economy.

#3: Access to temporary high-skilled workers to fill gaps in the Colorado marketplace



Many economists agree immigration leads to a positive net impact on the economy, but restrictions on the number of employment-based visas and the costs of employer sponsorships are preventing businesses from hiring the workers they need across all skill levels.^x Particularly for high-skilled jobs, these limitations prevent U.S. companies from recruiting talent to stay competitive with other countries.^{xi}

Across industries like high-demand science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields and healthcare, immigrants are vital to the Colorado economy, and U.S. immigration policy should reflect the need for improved access to temporary high-skilled workers with those skills needed in the Colorado marketplace.

Immigrants make up 13% of STEM workers in Colorado and can be instrumental in helping high-tech industries meet their full potential as need for high-skilled STEM workers increases rapidly in the state.^{xii}

Colorado companies are already experiencing a workforce shortage among STEM workers, especially within the high-tech industry. For example, 67% of STEM jobs are in computing.^{xiii} In Colorado, there were 20,369 open computing jobs in 2022 — 2.1x the average demand rate in the state.^{xiv} However, only 1,266 students graduated with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science in 2018 in the state, leaving 13,655 open computing jobs if everyone in-state is hired.^{xv}

Immigration is not the only answer, but it is a critical one for many industries. Work visas allow employers to fill urgent open positions while also providing the necessary time to implement long-term solutions to the mounting labor shortages, including efforts to increase the number of Colorado graduates with the necessary education and skills for these positions.

About H-1B Person in Specialty Occupation Visas

The ability to hire highly-skilled immigrants allows employers to access skills not readily available and to combine the skills with those of U.S.-born workers.^{xvi} In the U.S., generally the only practical way to hire a highly-skilled foreign national is on an H-1B visa.^{xvii}

Unfortunately, the shortcomings of the H-1B category have concerned employers for years.^{xviii} More than half of applicants for H-1B visas each year are denied the opportunity to work due to the low H-1B quota. In 2018, more than 190,000 people applied for just 85,000 available high-skill H-1B visas in the U.S.^{xix}

#4: Access to workers who fill labor-intensive jobs have skills needed in the Colorado marketplace for temporary and year-round positions

Temporary Labor Intensive Foreign Worker Visas (H-2A & H-2B Visas)

Temporary, seasonal labor-intensive and physically demanding positions are not appealing to U.S. born workers;^{xx} thus, it is important for U.S. immigration policy to reflect the need for improved access to temporary labor intensive workers with experience needed in the Colorado marketplace.



About H-2A Temporary (Seasonal) Agricultural Worker Visas

The program allows employers to bring in immigrant workers temporarily for on-the-farm positions that cannot be filled locally.^{xxi} These workers are brought in to fill these jobs that cannot otherwise be filled, and the workers return home when done.

For example, peach growers in the Colorado agriculture industry depend on immigrant seasonal agriculture workers.

About H-2B Temporary (Seasonal) Non-Agricultural Worker Visas

The H-2B program allows employers to temporarily bring in immigrant workers for non-farm positions that cannot be filled locally.^{xxii}

Colorado non-agricultural industries that rely on foreign seasonal labor include summer and winter resorts, hospitality, landscaping and groundskeeping, and the construction industry.

In 2019, immigrants made up 21.2% of workers in the traveler accommodations industry.^{xxiii}

Year-Round Labor Intensive Foreign Workers (No Visa Available)

Current law provides no visa category for foreign-born workers to work legally in the U.S. on a year-round basis in high-demand industries, such as hospitality, construction and certain agriculture industries.^{xxiv}

Establishing a legal workable system to hire for positions in these year-round industries by reforming the current system and creating a new visa category would help fill critical workforce needs.

Colorado's dairy sector is one of Colorado's industries that relies upon year-round labor, not seasonal labor like other agricultural industries. While it faces similar workforce shortages, it does not have access to a year-round work visa program.

#5: Policies encouraging and attracting immigrant entrepreneurs like those who have started businesses and are employing Coloradans

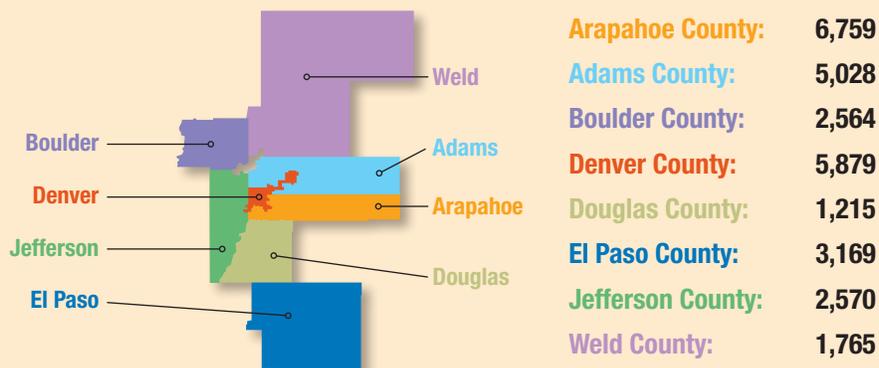


New businesses are a major driver of job growth in the U.S. and in Colorado. Immigrants play a particularly important role, especially during a time of economic recovery, founding businesses at far higher rates than individuals born in the U.S.^{xxv}

In 2019, there were 43,684 immigrant entrepreneurs that generated \$1.2B in total business income.^{xxvi}

Given the entrepreneurial spirit of the Colorado economy, it is notable that there is no designated path to permanent residence for an entrepreneur who starts a business in the United States, and this lack of a pathway unfortunately encourages foreigners with successful ideas and the ability to attract capital to pursue startup opportunities in other nations.^{xxvii}

A Snapshot of Immigrant Businesses Across Colorado^{xxix}





Resources

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- ii "A Modern Approach to U.S. Immigration Policy." Business Roundtable, 2019.
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- v "2020 Fact Sheet: Colorado." Open Doors, 2020, https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/colorado/.
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Additional Resources

[Business Roundtable](#)

[American Immigration Council](#)

Immigration is a top issue, but the national conversation often misses what is really happening on the ground in Colorado. It has become imperative that policy makers and the general public better understand the economic impacts of immigration in our communities and how modern immigration policies will benefit our state.

Immigrants make valuable contributions to the Colorado economy and workforce. They are workers and taxpayers who complement the domestic workforce and make contributions large and small to our companies and local communities.



Colorado Immigrants and the Economyⁱ

Data year: 2019

537,334 immigrants resided in Colorado, and that number continues to grow.

Colorado immigrants paid **\$5.8 billion** in taxes and held **\$15.6 billion** in spending power.

129,565 immigrant homeowners in Colorado held a housing wealth of **\$5.6 billion**.

Immigrant-led households also paid **\$1.4 billion** in rent in Colorado.



Colorado Immigrants and the Workforceⁱⁱ

Data year: 2019

83% of Colorado's foreign-born population were working age, allowing them to contribute extensively to our economy.

Immigrants are plugging gaps across the skills spectrum, from maintenance and hospitality to STEM and healthcare. Immigrants made up more than 9% of the state population, but accounted for:

35.5% of services to buildings and dwellings workers (maintenance),

21.2% of traveler accommodation (hospitality),

13% of STEM workers (science, technology, engineering and mathematics),

and **7%** of nurses and **15.8%** of health aides (healthcare).

For a breakdown by Colorado Congressional District visit [Map the Impact](#).



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i "Map the Impact: Immigrants and the Economy in Colorado". American Immigration Council, 2022, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/colorado/>.

ii Ibid.



Immigration is a top issue, but the national conversation often misses what is really happening on the ground in Colorado. It has become imperative that we, our policy makers and the general public, better understand the economic impacts of immigration in our communities and the benefits modern immigration policies will bring to our state.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does immigration reform mean? Is this a local, state or federal issue?	<p>Modernizing our immigration system ultimately requires a solution on the federal level with congressional action.</p> <p>Sensible immigration reforms will help the economy grow and create jobs for fellow Coloradans while also improving national security to create a cohesive and safe working system.</p>
Why immigration reform now?	<p>The U.S. has long been the destination for the world’s hardest working, entrepreneurial, and talented immigrants. However, U.S. immigration policy has remained virtually unchanged since the 1980s and is not designed to fit today’s economy.ⁱ The last major effort for reform by Congress was in 2013 when the U.S. Senate passed comprehensive immigration reform legislation by a bipartisan and overwhelming vote of 68-32.ⁱⁱ The legislation was not taken up by the U.S. House of Representatives.ⁱⁱⁱ</p> <p>The intensifying need for reform affects the daily lives of businesses and associations that drive Colorado’s demanding economy. We are seeing the clear and visible impact on the economy by immigrants across the skills spectrum, especially with frontline and essential workers during the response and recovery to the COVID-19 crisis.^{iv} Immigrants are vital to every aspect of Colorado’s economy and workforce, from entrepreneurs and innovators, to agriculture and dairy, healthcare, construction, STEM workers, and more.^v</p> <p>Mounting labor shortages in top Colorado industries have brought this issue to an inevitable tipping point. Employers need a modern immigration system to address worker shortages and long-term labor needs.</p>

Frequently Asked Questions

<p>Colorado’s population has been growing at a rapid pace in recent years, so why are there labor shortages? How does immigration play a role?</p>	<p>Colorado employers are facing worker shortages for both high-skilled and labor intensive positions.</p> <p>When it comes to high-skilled positions, Colorado companies are already experiencing a workforce shortage among STEM workers, especially within the high-tech industry. For example, 67% of STEM jobs are in computing.^{vi} In Colorado, there were 14,921 open computing jobs in January 2021 — 2.6 times the average demand rate in the state.^{vii} However, only 1,266 students graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science in 2018 in the state, leaving 13,655 open computing jobs if everyone in-state is hired.^{viii}</p> <p>Labor intensive worker shortages are regularly found in Colorado’s agriculture and hospitality industries where the work is often temporary, and physically demanding — all of which have been shown to be unappealing to U.S.-born workers.^{ix}</p>
<p>There have been several changes to work visa allocations by executive order in the past few years, do these types of changes impact economic growth in Colorado?</p>	<p>Colorado Immigrants and the Workforce^x</p> <p>Immigrants are plugging gaps across the skills spectrum, from construction and hospitality to STEM and healthcare. In 2019, immigrants made up 9.3% of the state population but accounted for:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-end;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>35.5% of services to buildings and dwellings workers (building maintenance)</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>21.2% of traveler accommodation (hospitality)</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>13% of STEM workers (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>7% of nurses and 15.8% of health aides (healthcare)</p> </div> </div> <p>Immigration is not the only answer, but it is a critical one for many industries. Work visas allow employers to fill urgent open positions while also providing the necessary time to implement long-term solutions to the mounting labor shortages.</p>
<p>How does a modern approach consider border security?</p>	<p>Unpredictable changes to work visa programs and other immigration policies disrupt business operations, negatively impact the lives of employees, and ultimately harm our ability to rebuild the economy. Businesses are more likely to invest and grow in Colorado if they know the government will administer U.S. immigration laws in a transparent, consistent and predictable manner. Those businesses are also better situated to bring key employees to Colorado who will contribute to our communities and economy, rather than work remotely from another country.^{xi}</p> <p>National security is incredibly important and encompasses much more than security efforts at our borders. It is important for our immigration policies to provide strong national security through the use of cutting-edge technology balanced with reforms that promote economic growth, support job creation, and boost our global competitiveness.^{xii}</p> <p>Just as Colorado companies employ leading innovations to improve processes and keep America competitive, the government should use cutting-edge technology to enhance national security and improve the administration of immigration laws.^{xiii}</p>



Frequently Asked Questions

Would a balanced reform approach addressing both national security and visa reform really impact the Colorado economy?

According to a 50-state analysis conducted by the national Business Roundtable on the economic effects of immigration policies there would be a positive impact to the Colorado economy.^{xiv}

Components of Balanced Reform & Enforcement Only Scenarios^{xv}

Scenario 1: Balanced Reform

- Improved Border Security & Enforcement
- Temporary High-Skilled Workers (H-1B Reform)
- Temporary Agricultural Workers (H-2A Reform)
- Temporary Nonagricultural Labor Intensive Workers
 - Green Card Reform

Scenario 2: Enforcement Only

- Aggressive Border Security and Enforcement
 - Deportation and Voluntary Departure

Impact to Colorado: Balanced Reform vs. Enforcement Only^{xvi}

	Balanced	Enforcement Only
GDP \$ (10-Year)	\$12.51BB	-\$11.29BB
GDP % (10-Year)	3.11%	-2.78%
JOBS # (10-Year)	132.84k	-125.46k
WAGES \$ (First Year)	\$242.85	-\$179.81

To view the national Business Roundtable's 50-state analysis visit [The Economic Effects of Immigration Policy Choices](#).

Does immigration impact our higher education systems? Do international students play a role in the Colorado economy?

International students support Colorado's higher education institutions, local communities, and contribute millions of dollars to the Colorado economy. In 2020, the 11,631 international students at Colorado colleges and universities contributed an estimated \$428.8 million to the Colorado economy through their tuition payments and day-to-day spending.^{xvii}

A high percentage of STEM graduate students at U.S. universities are foreign born, and it is important for U.S. economic and innovation leadership to be able to retain and employ them.^{xviii} Other international students are also graduating into economically critical fields like healthcare where they are assisting in meeting the healthcare needs in rural and lower-income communities.^{xix}

High-skilled immigrants also create American jobs. Past research shows that for each international student who graduates from an American university and remains in the country to work in a STEM-related field, an additional 2.62 American jobs are created.^{xx}

Our universities attract the best and brightest from around the world, but our immigration system requires that many of them go home after graduation, only to compete with us from abroad.^{xxi}

Removing barriers to attracting and retaining foreign-born students at Colorado universities and ensuring stable student visa program policies would benefit our higher institutions and the Colorado economy.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do you think is the biggest misconception some Americans have about immigrants and immigration in the U.S.?

The biggest misconception about immigration is often the belief that immigrants take American jobs. However, the data shows that is not the reality. In industry after industry, including here in Colorado, immigrants have helped our companies grow, and will continue to help us recover from the economic downturn.

Immigrants are helping Colorado meet its growing demand for healthcare workers, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

From 2015 to 2019, online job postings for nurses increased by 15.1 percent. Meanwhile, the share of immigrants working as nurses increased by 27 percent between 2014 and 2018, compared to 13 percent among U.S.-born individuals.

Immigrants are helping to fill critical teacher shortages across the state.

Online job posting for K-12 teaching positions increased by 43.2 percent from 2015 to 2019, with demand for middle school teachers increasing by 51.3 percent during this time period. The share of immigrants working as teachers increased by 20.6 percent between 2014 and 2018.

Immigrants are playing essential roles as social workers and behavioral health providers, with demand spiking due in part to the pandemic.

Online job postings for social workers and counselors nearly tripled, with an increase of 174.7 percent. Immigrants accounted for nearly 8 percent of workers in these fields in 2018.^{xxii}

Immigrants are more likely to be of working age which is helping us address our aging worker crisis.^{xxiii} They are helping address worker shortages in top Colorado industries ensuring our companies remain globally competitive while locally rooted.^{xxiv} Immigrants are employing Coloradans through their self-owned businesses. They are contributing millions of tax dollars into our state and local economies.^{xxv}

[Immigrants in Colorado's Workforce - New American Economy Research Fund](#)



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Additional Resources

Business Roundtable
American Immigration Council